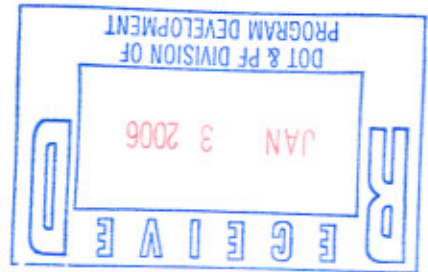


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Eric Lee
P.O.Box 858
Petersburg, Alaska 99833
December 30, 2005

Statewide Planning Office - Div. Of program Development
3132 Channel Drive, Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801-7898



To whom it may concern:

My name is Eric Lee. I submit these comments representing only myself in hopes they will be useful in the process of allocating STIP funds in the future.

I became involved in transportation issues when the State DOT issued the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan presenting the concept of road links and fast ferry shuttles approximately 6 years ago. Studying the plan, it became clear that the concept of fast ferries and road links was suited to tourists traveling in summer, rather than for the local traveling citizens and businesses transporting goods, especially fresh seafood.

For example, as planned in the SATP, the fast ferry traveling between Ketchikan and Petersburg would not even stop in Wrangell. So Wrangell will suffer greatly from reduced service as the mainline ferries are phased out.

Another serious concern to the communities of central and south Southeastern Alaska, Petersburg, Wrangell, and Ketchikan, is the fact that the road link- fast ferry plan is unsuitable for the transportation of fresh seafood to market. Alaska Marine Lines, the company that currently ships virtually all the seafood vans out of Petersburg, Wrangell and Ketchikan has no plans to ship any vans at all on the fast ferry route due to the greatly increased expense and unreliability inherent in transporting seafood vans that way. The seafood industry is the backbone of the economy of Southeast Alaska. With the industry trend going more to freshness in the marketplace, losing our ability to get our fresh seafood to market would create a major obstacle for all these communities.

At the public meetings held before the adoption of the Transportation Plan I repeatedly asked DOT officials the question: How will we get our fresh seafood to market when the mainline ferries are phased out? There were verbal assurances from the officials that mainline vessels would continue to operate in Southeast, but those assurances are unrealistic. The whole misguided idea of the fast ferry-road link plan is to save the state money, so why would the state continue mainline service after the fast ferry road link system is in place? How could the state hope to pay for another ferry system through Southeast Alaska when it can't even afford the number of ferries and terminals in operation now? It defies logic. If the state cannot afford the present mainline system, and builds another to replace it, the new system will draw so much money from the Marine Highway operating funds that mainline service will have to be phased out. It is that simple.

So we must find an answer to the question of how to get our fresh seafood to market.

Clearly, other alternatives need to be considered. I believe a more conventional plan using more conventional vessels on a new routing plan from Petersburg south to Prince Rupert will serve the communities of Petersburg, Wrangell, and Ketchikan far better and more cost-effectively than the current fast ferry-road link plan, which would result in the phasing out of mainline service.

This plan would consist of the construction and deployment of two mid-sized ferries of day-boat design, that would be travel somewhat faster and be much more economical to operate due to reduced crew and fuel-efficient design. The running time between Prince Rupert and Petersburg is approximately 17 hours, which means that the trip can easily be made in a day. A mid-sized ferry could leave Prince Rupert early in the morning, stop in Ketchikan and Wrangell and arrive in Petersburg late the same day. The ferry would overnight at Petersburg and leave southbound very early the next morning. It would make the stops in Wrangell and Ketchikan, picking up people and seafood vans on its way, arriving back at Prince Rupert late in the evening the same day. Early the following morning it would depart again northbound on the same route and schedule, arriving in Petersburg at approximately the same time as its previous northbound trip. The two-day round trip to Petersburg and back means that, with two boats on this route, one leaving Prince Rupert northbound, and one leaving Petersburg southbound each day, same time daily service could be provided on most days. Departure times would need to vary on some days to accommodate low tide limitations in Wrangell Narrows.

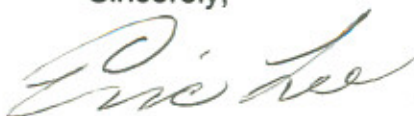
Same-time daily service was a main goal of the Southeast Transportation plan, and this routing would achieve that goal far simpler and more economically than the fast-ferry road link plan. In addition, it would provide far better transportation for seafood vans heading south to market.

Another great cost-saving benefit of this plan is that it would eliminate the need to build, operate and maintain the South Mitkof Terminal as planned in the Transportation Plan. The costly and unnecessary 20+ million dollar remote terminal poses many problems for the state, travelers, and the City of Petersburg.

Since it is only an 8 hour run between Petersburg and Juneau, the transportation needs for this segment of Southeast could be served well by either a conventional ferry of day boat design or a fast ferry. Both could make the round trip easily in a day, making same time daily departures from both communities possible on most days. It is important to note, however, that a modern automated mid-sized ferry of day boat design with a reduced crew would be far less expensive to operate than a fast ferry.

I appreciate the difficult job the Alaska DOT has in solving the transportation needs of Southeast Alaska. However, with careful planning and wise use of STIP funds, the Marine Highway System will provide excellent transportation service far into the future, just as it has in the past.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eric Lee".

To whom it may concern:

After mailing a copy of this letter yesterday, I realized I had not signed it. Here is a copy of the same letter w my signature.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be "E. B.", written in dark ink.